

## Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior

## § 83.3

*Letter of intent* means an undocumented letter or resolution by which an Indian group requests Federal acknowledgment as an Indian tribe and expresses its intent to submit a documented petition.

*Member of an Indian group* means an individual who is recognized by an Indian group as meeting its membership criteria and who consents to being listed as a member of that group.

*Member of an Indian tribe* means an individual who meets the membership requirements of the tribe as set forth in its governing document or, absent such a document, has been recognized as a member collectively by those persons comprising the tribal governing body, and has consistently maintained tribal relations with the tribe or is listed on the tribal rolls of that tribe as a member, if such rolls are kept.

*Petitioner* means any entity that has submitted a letter of intent to the Secretary requesting acknowledgment that it is an Indian tribe.

*Political influence or authority* means a tribal council, leadership, internal process or other mechanism which the group has used as a means of influencing or controlling the behavior of its members in significant respects, and/or making decisions for the group which substantially affect its members, and/or representing the group in dealing with outsiders in matters of consequence. This process is to be understood in the context of the history, culture and social organization of the group.

*Previous Federal acknowledgment* means action by the Federal government clearly premised on identification of a tribal political entity and indicating clearly the recognition of a relationship between that entity and the United States.

*Secretary* means the Secretary of the Interior or that officer's authorized representative.

*Sustained contact* means the period of earliest sustained non-Indian settlement and/or governmental presence in the local area in which the historical tribe or tribes from which the petitioner descends was located historically.

*Tribal relations* means participation by an individual in a political and social relationship with an Indian tribe.

*Tribal roll*, for purposes of these regulations, means a list exclusively of those individuals who have been determined by the tribe to meet the tribe's membership requirements as set forth in its governing document. In the absence of such a document, a tribal roll means a list of those recognized as members by the tribe's governing body. In either case, those individuals on a tribal roll must have affirmatively demonstrated consent to being listed as members.

### § 83.2 Purpose.

The purpose of this part is to establish a departmental procedure and policy for acknowledging that certain American Indian groups exist as tribes. Acknowledgment of tribal existence by the Department is a prerequisite to the protection, services, and benefits of the Federal government available to Indian tribes by virtue of their status as tribes. Acknowledgment shall also mean that the tribe is entitled to the immunities and privileges available to other federally acknowledged Indian tribes by virtue of their government-to-government relationship with the United States as well as the responsibilities, powers, limitations and obligations of such tribes. Acknowledgment shall subject the Indian tribe to the same authority of Congress and the United States to which other federally acknowledged tribes are subjected.

### § 83.3 Scope.

(a) This part applies only to those American Indian groups indigenous to the continental United States which are not currently acknowledged as Indian tribes by the Department. It is intended to apply to groups that can establish a substantially continuous tribal existence and which have functioned as autonomous entities throughout history until the present.

(b) Indian tribes, organized bands, pueblos, Alaska Native villages, or communities which are already acknowledged as such and are receiving services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs may not be reviewed under the

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procedures established by these regulations.

(c) Associations, organizations, corporations or groups of any character that have been formed in recent times may not be acknowledged under these regulations. The fact that a group that meets the criteria in § 83.7 (a) through (g) has recently incorporated or otherwise formalized its existing autonomous political process will be viewed as a change in form and have no bearing on the Assistant Secretary's final decision.

(d) Splinter groups, political factions, communities or groups of any character that separate from the main body of a currently acknowledged tribe may not be acknowledged under these regulations. However, groups that can establish clearly that they have functioned throughout history until the present as an autonomous tribal entity may be acknowledged under this part, even though they have been regarded by some as part of or have been associated in some manner with an acknowledged North American Indian tribe.

(e) Further, groups which are, or the members of which are, subject to congressional legislation terminating or forbidding the Federal relationship may not be acknowledged under this part.

(f) Finally, groups that previously petitioned and were denied Federal acknowledgment under these regulations or under previous regulations in part 83 of this title, may not be acknowledged under these regulations. This includes reorganized or reconstituted petitioners previously denied, or splinter groups, spin-offs, or component groups of any type that were once part of petitioners previously denied.

(g) Indian groups whose documented petitions are under active consideration at the effective date of these revised regulations may choose to complete their petitioning process either under these regulations or under the previous acknowledgment regulations in part 83 of this title. This choice must be made by April 26, 1994. This option shall apply to any petition for which a determination is not final and effective. Such petitioners may request a suspension of consideration under § 83.10(g) of not more than 180 days in

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order to provide additional information or argument.

#### § 83.4 Filing a letter of intent.

(a) Any Indian group in the continental United States that believes it should be acknowledged as an Indian tribe and that it can satisfy the criteria in § 83.7 may submit a letter of intent.

(b) Letters of intent requesting acknowledgment that an Indian group exists as an Indian tribe shall be filed with the Assistant Secretary—Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC 20240. Attention: Branch of Acknowledgment and Research, Mail Stop 2611–MIB. A letter of intent may be filed in advance of, or at the same time as, a group's documented petition.

(c) A letter of intent must be produced, dated and signed by the governing body of an Indian group and submitted to the Assistant Secretary.

#### § 83.5 Duties of the Department.

(a) The Department shall publish in the FEDERAL REGISTER, no less frequently than every three years, a list of all Indian tribes entitled to receive services from the Bureau by virtue of their status as Indian tribes. The list may be published more frequently, if the Assistant Secretary deems it necessary.

(b) The Assistant Secretary shall make available revised and expanded guidelines for the preparation of documented petitions by September 23, 1994. These guidelines will include an explanation of the criteria and other provisions of the regulations, a discussion of the types of evidence which may be used to demonstrate particular criteria or other provisions of the regulations, and general suggestions and guidelines on how and where to conduct research. The guidelines may be supplemented or updated as necessary. The Department's example of a documented petition format, while preferable, shall not preclude the use of any other format.

(c) The Department shall, upon request, provide petitioners with suggestions and advice regarding preparation of the documented petition. The Department shall not be responsible for